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REVIEWS

CONTEMPORARY DRAMA TEXTS

The foreword to one of the series discussed below says: "Parece evidente que el estudio del español se dirige ahora más que antes a las realidades actuales de los pueblos hispánicos, y que por lo tanto la literatura que debe ser conocida y utilizada generalmente en las clases debe ser la literatura de hoy, la literatura actualmente viva, la que representa el espíritu y los ideales actuales de la gran comunidad hispana." This spirit and these ideals are nowhere more manifest than in the drama; theatrical works offering at the same time a conversational vocabulary and a rapidity of action that holds the interest of the student. For this reason the series of contemporary drama texts inaugurated by two American book companies will be very welcome. The following three volumes have already appeared in these series:

(a) **Teatro de Ensueño**, by G. Martínez Sierra. Edited with introduction, notes, exercises, and vocabulary, by Aurelio M. Espinosa, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Spanish, Leland Stanford Junior University. World Book Company, Yonkers-on-Hudson, New York, 1917. 12mo., xviii + 108 pp. (65 text, 12 exercises, 26 vocabulary).

(b) **El Príncipe que Todo lo Aprendió en los Libros**, by Jacinto Benavente. Edited with introduction, notes, exercises, and vocabulary, by Aurelio M. Espinosa, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Spanish, Leland Stanford Junior University. World Book Company, New York, 1918. 12mo., xvi + 87 pp. (44 text, 14 exercises, 26 vocabulary).

(c) **Tres Comedias: Sin Querer, De Pequeñas Causas . . . , Los Intereses Creados**, por Jacinto Benavente. Edited by John Van Horne, Ph.D., University of Illinois. D. C. Heath & Co., Boston, 1918. 12mo., xxxvi + 189 pp. (105 text, 23 notes, 60 vocabulary).

(a) Professor Espinosa in his introduction emphasizes the "deep feeling" and "inspiration" of Martínez Sierra's prose. As Professor Owen says, in his recent review of this edition (*Modern Language Journal*, November, 1918, Vol. III, No. 2), this is somewhat a matter of opinion. To some of us his prose seems artificial and studied, rather than inspired, but all will agree that in beauty and grace it is unsurpassed in modern Spanish. This is ample justification for the publication of this text, and both high-school and college students will find the three short plays very pleasing. The vocabulary is not so poetic that it has no practical value, though some may doubt the wisdom of using it as a basis for composition. However, the exercises are well written and some may find them of service.

The short introduction is evidently written for the student and gives a sympathetic glimpse of the modern Spanish stage. The book is well printed and typographical errors are few. Professor Owen has called attention to what he calls "trifling infelicities of detail," so these need not be mentioned

here. Some are of little importance, some merely variants in choice of English readings. A note to p. 22, l. 16, reads: "*La reina que dices*: 'the queen whom you mention.' The use of *decir* with this meaning is now archaic." Professor Owen's statement that this is common colloquial Spanish of today is open to question. P. 58, l. 20, reads: "*El rey quiso morirse también de pena*," and we find in a note: "*Quiso*: the preterit is used to express the intensity of the wish." This Professor Owen doubts, and says: "The past absolute of *querer* is best translated 'tried'." Would he have it translated "The king *tried* to die of grief"? This would be obviously absurd. The best translation is probably: "The king would willingly have died of grief, but could not." In *Don Quijote* (Chapter III), "*y jamás quiso (levantarse) hasta que le hubo de decir*," etc., the meaning is very similar, expressing the intensity of his will. Certainly one should not translate *agosto* (p. 32, l. 6) "harvest," though the vocabulary might have glossed it "the harvest-month".

In the hands of an appreciative teacher these little plays should prove an inspiration to even the high-school student and awaken him to the beauties of the Spanish language.

(b) is a play written for a children's theater and can be read earlier in the course and by younger students than (a). The introduction gives a clear outline of Benavente's work and defines his place in contemporary Spanish literature. The Biographical References might be more complete and would be more useful if they mentioned some articles and reviews published in English that would be accessible to the high-school teacher, for example, the excellent introduction by John Garrett Underhill to his volume, "Plays by Benavente" (New York, 1917).

The book as a whole is better edited than (a), the translations in notes and vocabulary more happily chosen. A very few variations and omissions may be mentioned. P. 3, l. 9, *si . . . no hubiéramos de faltarle*, is translated, "if . . . we did not have to fail him". "Fail" is rather unusual in this sense; a better rendering would be "to leave him". P. 9, l. 14, *acabara* should have a note on this use of the subjunctive. *Prinçpat* is given in the vocabulary, "principal, chief". These would hardly do for p. 10, l. 18, and p. 12, l. 23; "important" would be better. P. 17, l. 23, *venga* should be explained either in notes or vocabulary. The archaic *vos* is explained, p. 30, l. 1 note, but this explanation should be given before (p. 15, l. 11). But one serious typographical error may be noted (p. xv, l. 16), *confusa* for *confiada* in the title of the second part of *Los intereses creados*. We miss a more extended discussion of the latter, certainly the best known and by many considered the best of Benavente's plays, but perhaps space would not permit.

Every student of Spanish should know something of Benavente, and no play is better suited to introduce him to the master than this children's drama, and it is especially adapted to high-school classes. The exercises are practical, and in this case will be very useful, since the text is simple and affords excellent and varied material for conversation and composition.

(c) From this simple text, practically edited for students' use, one turns with trepidation to the stupendously erudite volume of Benavente's plays called *Tres Comedias*. A twenty-page introduction discusses Benavente's

dramatic career, including a complete list of his plays, taken from the title pages of the *Teatro*. The student will be puzzled by some of these titles, as the words are not given a place in the vocabulary. Imagine a first-year student (and the editor thinks the book might be used in the first year!) translating *La Malquerida*, *Las cigarras hormigas*, *La Loba de los sueños*, etc., at sight! Perhaps the introduction is not meant for students' reading. If not, why put it in? Few will agree with the editor in his selection of the plays worth discussing in detail. Some of the best are ignored, or passed over lightly. For *Los intereses creados* itself one is referred to the notes, but the discussion there found (pp. 116-118) sheds little light on the significance of the play. A partial synopsis of the sequel, *La Ciudad alegre y confiada*, is given, but breaks off in the middle without even finishing the plot. The high-school student and teacher too, who, of course, will not have the original at hand, will doubtless like to know what becomes of Crispín, Leandro, *et al.* Nor does Dr. Van Horne explain the meaning of the title and its source (Zephaniah II, 15). He says, "*La Ciudad alegre y confiada* does not seem quite to reach the standard of its predecessor". And as a dramatic composition it certainly does not, but as a play inspired by the great war and as a study of present-day social and political problems it is surely worth more than a few passing words in so pretentious an edition of *Los intereses creados*. A brief bibliography follows the introduction. Why is a reference given to the French edition (1913) of FitzMaurice-Kelly, when teachers will be more likely to have at hand the later Spanish version? The short sketch of Benavente in Spanish, presumably by Professor Onís, general editor of the series, elucidates some points brought out in the introduction. Neither tells much about the modern Spanish theater. No mention is made of the *género chico*, to which all of the plays in the volume belong.

The book is remarkably free from typographical errors, and the vocabulary is quite complete; most of the idioms are placed there, where they should be, rather than in the notes. The terms, *ministro*, *ministra*, *presidente*, etc., will be understood by one who knows Spanish politics, but otherwise, "minister," "minister's wife" (mistress!), "president," etc., are very misleading. How should the student know that *presidente* means "*Presidente del Consejo*—"premier"—and that a minister's wife is not the wife of a clergyman? Likewise the explanations of *cartera* and *Congreso* are inadequate, since the Spanish governmental system is so different from ours; *oposición* and *ministerial* are not explained at all. For the latter only "ministerial" is given. We translate, then (p. 34, l. 3), "If you had resigned, the *ministerials* would say so". How many American students know what "ministerials" are?

One note may be cited in full, as an illustration of a certain kind of text-editing (p. 123): "*Ordenanzas*. Ordinances or police regulations that required (and still require) Spanish innkeepers to report to the authorities within twenty-four hours of the arrival of a guest, his name, the place from which he comes, his business, and other details. A satisfactory statement of the law is to be found in the *Novísima recopilación*, Lib. III, Tit. XIX, Ley XXVII, 4. The *Novísima recopilación* is published in fairly convenient form in Alcubilla's *Códigos antiguos de España* (p. 1011). Of course, the date

assigned to the action of *Los intereses creados* is anterior to 1805, the year of the formulation of the code just mentioned; but the legal requirement was approximately the same in the earlier time."

The question suggested by the above is: "For whom are notes intended?" For the student, the teacher, or the editor? The student clearly cares nothing for all this. The first sentence explains all that he needs to know or should take time to read. Not one teacher of Spanish in a thousand has access to the work of Alcubilla, nor would he be interested in looking it up if he had. If he did, it would give him no information needed in understanding the play he is reading. It is plain, then, that the notes in many of our school texts are written partly for the editor's benefit, as evidence of time and trouble spent in gathering information from remote sources. There is room for critical editions of many works of literature, but this type of what may be called "Germanic scholarship" should find no place in a text that is to be put into the hands of high-school students and college freshmen. Yet the editor does not tell such students who François Villon and Molière were (p. 121, notes)! Why mention Villon at all? Does he suppose that all high-school students are familiar with Villon's ballads and Molière's plays?

Of what possible use to the student is the information that the Teatro Lara is "situated on the Corredera Baja de San Pablo, considerably to the north of the Puerta del Sol (p. 117)"? Or similar details concerning the Teatro de la Comedia (p. 107) and the Teatro de la Princesa (p. 114)? The notes will hardly be used as a guide-book, and, if intended as such, the information might be still more explicit. Details should undoubtedly be given concerning places mentioned in the text, but the specific location of these theaters is of no importance to anyone, save a visitor in Madrid. Yet the *Advertencia General* says of this series (p. 5): "*Las notas tendrán un carácter práctico.*"

Spanish is being taught as a living language and to younger students than formerly, hence our texts must be practical rather than erudite. Let editors put into the notes what will be of real help to the student and to the teacher of perhaps limited information in other fields. To so present *Los intereses creados* that the student may understand the spirit of New Spain and the philosophy of life of her greatest living dramatist, should be the mission of a text such as the one here discussed. The teacher who knows Modern Spain and knows Benavente can do this without notes or introduction; it is for the teacher who does not, and for the pupils of such a teacher, that they should be written, and in the criticisms here made this point has been constantly in mind.

An American edition of this great play has been awaited for some time. It should find a place somewhere in every college course, and will be a useful text in the third or fourth year of high school. It certainly should not be read by first-year students, either in high school or college.

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